



BRIEFING: SEPTEMBER 16, 2014, BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #5

TO: Chairman Richard and Board Members

FROM: Michelle Boehm, Southern California Regional Director

DATE: September 16, 2014

RE: Report on Recent Scoping Meetings for the Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles Project Sections

Background

The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board on the scoping process and comments received during the 2014 public scoping period for the Palmdale to Burbank (P-B) and Burbank to Los Angeles (B-LA) Project Sections of the California high-speed rail system. The report provides a brief description of the public scoping process and meetings and a summary of the public and agency comments received during scoping. The enclosed content reflects feedback received by August 29, 2014. A full summary of all feedback received through September 12, 2014 will be presented in the final scoping reports.

Discussion

Context of Palmdale to Burbank and Burbank to Los Angeles Scoping

Scoping allows interested parties (agencies, public, community groups, etc.) to provide project sponsors (the Authority and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)) information about the range of alternatives, mitigation measures, and potential environmental and community impacts that should be considered in the preparation of environmental documentation.

This scoping effort amends the earlier scoping period for the Palmdale-Los Angeles (P-LA) Section that was held in 2007.¹ Subsequent to the 2007 scoping period several Alternative Analyses (AAs) have been completed that refined project-level alternatives, including one Preliminary AA (2010) and three Supplemental AAs (2011, 2012, and 2014). Each of these AAs evaluated potential alignment alternatives and station options based on public and agency input and refined project design requirements.

¹ The Authority issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the project-level EIR/EIS for the P-LA Section of the HSR System on March 12, 2007 (SCH No. 2007031066). FRA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a project-level EIS for the P-LA Section of the HSR System in the Federal Register on March 9, 2007.

The 2014 P-LA Supplemental AA, presented to the Board in June 2014, discussed the concept of evaluating P-B and B-LA as two sections, evaluating a more direct alternative between Palmdale and Burbank, and locating the San Fernando Valley Station near the Bob Hope Airport. The scoping process sought comments on these concepts.

Scoping Notices, Hearings, and Public Outreach

Starting on July 24, 2014, public scoping notices were published in the State Clearinghouse and Federal Register, as required by the environmental process. Agency and public comments were requested by August 31, 2014. On August 29, 2014, the Authority extended the scoping deadline to September 12, 2014 in response to public and agency feedback.

To further support this scoping process and obtain the most input possible, seven public meetings were held between August 5, 2014 and August 19, 2014, in Santa Clarita, Burbank, Palmdale, Acton/Agua Dulce, Sylmar, Lake View Terrace, and downtown Los Angeles. In addition, one federal agency scoping meeting was held on August 8, 2014 in downtown Los Angeles and substantial coordination was done with elected officials, local, regional, and state agencies, community groups, and the public at large. Public scoping meetings were advertised by local newspapers and the County Clerk's office, and all notices requested comments from the public. The Authority and FRA ensured widespread access to this information by distributing meeting notification materials in English and Spanish, and providing translation services for all notice material in Spanish, Armenian, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

In total, 916 people signed in as attendees at the public scoping meetings. Interpretation services were available at every meeting in Spanish and was available upon request in the languages discussed above, depending on the community where the meeting was held. Each meeting included a presentation about the proposed P-B Project Section and the proposed B-LA Project Section. Attendees were encouraged to submit comments at the meetings, and comments could also be submitted by mail or e-mail throughout the comment period.

Information Presented at the Scoping Sessions

The public scoping notices and the presentations at the scoping meetings explained the following: existing SR 14 corridor alignments; reasons for dividing the P-LA section into two independent sections; a study corridor that would provide a more direct and partially tunneled route between Palmdale and Burbank; and, the proposed station locations in Palmdale, Burbank, and downtown Los Angeles. The alternative corridor study area was proposed in response to concerns and requests from communities and local elected officials. Public notices and materials presented during scoping are available on the Authority's website.

Next Steps

Summary scoping reports will be prepared for both P-B and B-LA sections that document all comments received during the scoping period. This information will be used to development the range of alternatives to be analyzed in the environmental documents.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only, staff does not recommend any Board action at this time.

Attachments

– Summary of Comments Received as of August 29, 2014